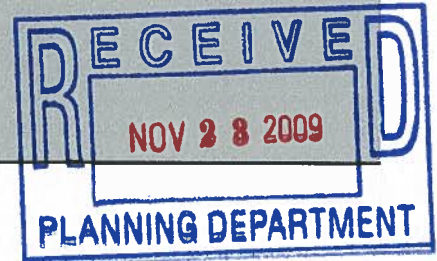


County of Loudoun

Department of Planning

MEMORANDUM



DATE: November 23, 2009

TO: Marchant Schneider, Project Manager
Land Use Review

FROM: Joe Gorney, AICP, LEED AP, Senior Planner
Community Planning

JCS

**SUBJECT: SPEX 2009-0020 & CMPT 2009-0006, 2nd Referral
Loudoun Water Storage Facility**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed use of the quarry as a water storage facility is in conformance with the general policies of the Revised General Plan and staff supports the application. However, issues remain regarding water supply protection, floodplains, visual access, and vegetation and screening.

BACKGROUND

The Loudoun County Sanitation Authority (Loudoun Water) requests a Special Exception and a Commission Permit to use an existing diabase quarry for water storage in the MR-HI (Mineral Resource – Heavy Industry) Zoning District following the cessation of mining operations. The quarry totals approximately 33.77 acres and lies within a larger 80.61-acre parcel. The application area is coincident with the existing limits of the quarry pit. The remainder of the parcel would continue to be used for heavy industrial uses and is not part of the application. The site is within the Quarry Notification Overlay District associated with the Luck Stone Quarry.

The site is located on the north side of the Washington & Old Dominion Regional Park (W&OD Trail) between Belmont Ridge Road (Route 659) and Goose Creek. The quarry is known as Quarry A and is being actively mined by the Luck Stone Corporation. Mining operations are expected to continue until the 2017-2020 timeframe. A second quarry (known as Quarry B) is located on the south side of the W&OD Trail. A tunnel under the W&OD Trail connects the two quarries. The principal access to the site is from Jackpit Lane, a private road, which connects to Belmont Ridge Road. The larger

property is further bounded by Residential uses to the east of Belmont Ridge Road, a self-storage facility and associated single-family dwelling to the north, and vacant land to the west of Goose Creek.

Staff has reviewed responses to Community Planning's first referral dated September 17, 2009. Below is a discussion of outstanding issues.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The subject site is governed under the policies outlined in the Revised General Plan. It is located within the Ashburn Community of the Suburban Policy Area and is designated for Extractive Industry uses (Revised General Plan, Chapter 6, Suburban Community Boundaries Map, and Chapter 7, Planned Land Use Map).

Specifically, the Industrial policies of Chapter 6 (Suburban Policy Area) and the Resource Extraction policies of Chapter 5 (The Green Infrastructure) of the Revised General Plan apply to the proposed development including quarry compatibility and reuse. The water and wastewater policies of Chapter 2 (Planning Approach) also apply.

The environmental features on the subject site were assessed applying the Green Infrastructure policies of Chapter 5 (The Green Infrastructure: Environmental, Natural, and Heritage Resources) of the Revised General Plan, including policies pertaining to river and stream corridor resources, wetlands, forest resources, steep and moderately steep slopes, diabase, and plant and wildlife habitats.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES

Water Supply Protection

In the first referral staff recommended that the applicant demonstrate a commitment to the withdrawal of water only during normal to high flows to help protect the integrity of the Potomac River.

In response the applicant has stated that a commitment is demonstrated through "water banking," which is a key component of its Central Water Supply Program. The applicant further notes that the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) monitors water flows in the Potomac River and that Loudoun Water has committed to following ICPRB withdrawal directives for times of low water flow in the Potomac River. Additionally, the applicant notes that withdrawals will be subject to approval by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the US Army Corps of Engineers as part of a Joint Permit approval process.

Staff notes that the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy and the ICPRB is initiating an assessment of the Middle Potomac River Watershed to define environmentally sustainable flows.

Staff recommends a condition of approval that the applicant will only withdraw water during normal to high flows. Additionally, staff recommends a condition of approval that the applicant will coordinate with the USACE regarding the Middle Potomac River Watershed Assessment.

Floodplain Delineation

In the first referral staff noted that the depicted floodplain does not appear to match the topography of the area and recommended that the applicant depict the limits of the floodplain on the plat so that floodplain accurately reflects the topography and hydrology of the area.

The applicant responded that the topographic and floodplain information reflect the latest County data and that a formal study of the present site conditions would be premature, as mining operations are expected to continue for a period of several years.

Staff recommends that the applicant complete a formal study of the current floodplain so that this information can be considered as the application moves forward.

Visual Access

In the first referral staff stated that it would be desirable if the applicant would allow visual access to the water storage facility from both the W&OD Trail and any future trails along Goose Creek or other portions of the Luck Stone property. Staff recommended that the applicant coordinate with Luck Stone Corporation, the County Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department, and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority regarding visual access from the surrounding trails and the construction of an overlook along each trail, which could include benches and interpretive signage. Interpretive signage could alert people to the presence of the water storage facility and explain the history of the quarry, the significance of the mineral resources and other surrounding natural features, and the basic design of the water supply system.

The applicant responded that they will coordinate with Luck Stone Corporation and public agencies if a decision is made by others to provide trails or overlooks in the vicinity of the quarry. The applicant noted that the design of the Quarry A water storage facility does not lend itself to public access, whether visual or physical and that other agency comments indicate a desire to retain existing trees and understory vegetation along the boundary of the W&OD Trail, limiting visual access to the quarry. Also, the applicant noted that the water storage elevation within the quarry pit is anticipated to be over twenty feet below the rim of the quarry and at least sixty feet below the elevation of the W&OD Trail and that quarry walls are steep with a ten-foot tall barbed wire fence proposed at the quarry rim.

Staff recommends that the applicant commit to single points of discrete visual access along current or future trails to aid in the interpretation of the site,

following coordination with Luck Stone Corporation, the County Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department, and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.

Vegetation & Screening

In the first referral staff recommended that areas within the limits of the Special Exception not inundated with water be revegetated with appropriate indigenous vegetation. Staff further recommended that any future improvements be constructed in a manner that causes the least environmental risk and visual disruption and that disturbed areas be stabilized with native vegetation and new facilities screened with trees, berms, and/or shrubs.

In response, the applicant stated that the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy requires quarries to follow reclamation standards as a precondition to the release of the quarry permit and that Luck Stone will incorporate these provisions as part of the reclamation process. These standards include provisions for regrading, resoiling, and revegetation where applicable.

Staff recommends that the applicant commit to a condition of approval regarding the revegetation with appropriate indigenous vegetation of areas not inundated with water, with the exception of visual access points from adjacent trails.

COMMISSION PERMIT

In accordance with the Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance, a Commission Permit is required when a public utility or public service facility is constructed to determine if the general location, character, and extent of the proposed use are in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed water storage facility is located in an industrial area, is surrounded by other industrial uses, and would reuse an existing quarry. The proposed use is a compatible use within the industrial area.

Staff finds that the general location, character, and extent of the proposed use is in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan and recommends approval of a Commission Permit for the proposed use.

RECOMMENDATION

The proposed use of the quarry as a water storage facility is in conformance with the general policies of the Revised General Plan. Staff recommends approval of the application with conditions.

cc: Julie Pastor, AICP, Planning Director
Cynthia Keegan, AICP, Program Manager (via email)